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SPEECH
OF
HON. J. POLLOCK, OF PENNSYLVANIA
ON
THE OREGON QUESTION,

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 1846.

The resolution from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, requiring the President to notify Great Britain of the intention of the United States to terminate the joint occupancy of Oregon, and to abrogate the convention of 1827, being under consideration in Committee of the Whole—

Mr. POLLOCK, who was entitled to the floor, rose and said :

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I design briefly to discuss the subject now under consideration. I am aware that the House is already wearied by so long and protracted a debate: the subject, though not exhausted, has lost its novelty; the interest it excites remains unabated. Although, Mr. Chairman, I believe I have a "clear and unquestionable" title to the whole hour under the rule, yet I am willing to compromise with the House, and perhaps not go beyond forty-nine minutes, or at furthest, upon the principle of progression and expansion, I may be inclined to occupy fifty-four minutes forty seconds.

In common with many gentlemen who have preceded me, I may be permitted to congratulate the House and the country that this question has now risen above party considerations. Its magnitude and importance require that it should do so. Parties, I acknowledge, sir, are not without their uses in Republican Governments: they are as necessary for the preservation and purity of republican institutions as the storms that agitate old ocean are for the purification of its mighty mass of waters. But this question, separated as it should be from all local feeling and sectional prejudices, is an American question—a question of American sovereignty—of American rights to American soil: a question involving the honor of our country in the maintenance of rights; and I do most earnest-

ly protest against its being degraded to a mere party question.

Sir, we have rights in Oregon—we have right to Oregon: this will be admitted by all, although gentlemen may honestly differ as to the extent of those rights. Our rights, then, whatever they are, or whatever may be their extent, must be maintained; they can never be honorably abandoned. Sir, to those propositions no dissenting voice will be heard.

I propose briefly to refer to, not to investigate, our rights in and our title to Oregon. From the best examination I have been enabled to make of this question, our title to the whole of Oregon is superior to that of any other nation on the face of the globe. Our title to 49° is clear, and ought to be unquestionable. Between 49° and 54° 40' there is, it must be admitted, some room to cavil. No gentleman in this House pretends to deny that Great Britain has *claims* to the country north of 49°. Whether these claims amount to rights—rights to be regarded by the United States and to be enforced by Great Britain, is another question; and that these *claims* have been, to some considerable extent, repeatedly recognised by the United States, must also be admitted with equal unanimity. Our title to Oregon has been set forth and maintained with clearness and signal ability by the honorable gentlemen to whom the diplomacy of the country has, at different periods in our history, been committed. These discussions, from the times of the venerable Gallatin down to the present Secretary of State, have been characterized by as much talent, skill, and profound knowledge of the subject, as the diplomatic records of any Government can exhibit. The question of title, thus determined, thus spread out upon the record, has been submitted to the country. The argument of

the Secretary of State, so far as regards the claim of Great Britain, is conclusive and irresistible. The British Minister himself has failed to refute them. The only right she has to claim anything from the United States rests exclusively on the fact, that we have recognised some right on her part to the territory in dispute, in the negotiations and treaties with her in 1818, 1824, 1826, 1827, and lastly in 1845. This recognition has been made by us at different periods and in various ways.

Throwing aside for the present the Spanish title, which is ours by purchase, our own, independent of that, is in itself superior to any which can be set up against us by any of the nations of the earth. The discovery of the mouth of the Columbia river, by Captain Gray; our settlement on its banks, not only at its mouth, at Astoria, but at a distance of several hundred miles up the stream, which settlements have been recognised by Great Britain, in the treaty at Ghent in 1814, and the subsequent restoration of Astoria to the United States in pursuance of that treaty in 1818; the exploration of the whole river and most of its branches by Lewis and Clarke in 1805; the fact of its contiguity to our own territories; all recognised as they are by the law of nations as elements of title, combine to invest us with a title to the territory which would be good against the world. The principle is generally, if not universally recognised, that the discovery of the mouth of a river before unknown, gives to the nation discovering it a right to the entire region drained by its waters. We are the discoverers of the Columbia, and our rights extend as far as its tributaries extend, unless some of those tributaries had been visited prior to our discovery, of which there is no authentic evidence. If it be true, as is asserted, and as geographers have established, that the Columbia river drains the country up to 53° north, then the discovery of the river gives us a title up to that latitude; thus leaving 10° 40' of disputed territory. But, sir, in addition to our own title thus derived, the Spanish title was acquired subsequently to our discoveries by the United States, and is now fully vested in us by virtue of the treaty of 1819 with Spain. This title, although it might have been considered whilst outstanding as antagonistical to ours, yet in our hands it has been united to, and strengthens, if need be, our own title, thus rendering it certainly and unqualifiedly better than the British title. If Great Britain has any claims based upon prior discovery, they can only be those surrendered to her by Spain. But when we regard the fact that the Spanish claims to discovery, which were unquestionably prior to hers, and admitted so to be by England herself, have now come into our possession, however inconsistent they may be with that which we possess in our own right, both being now merged into one, no nation can on that account now object to our claim. Two titles may in their nature be antagonistical, but when both unite in the same party, who can object because of their inconsistency? Not Great Britain certainly. Spain, prior to our purchase from her, might have objected and protested against our occupation and settlement of the country, yet, having by purchase succeeded to all her rights, our title therefore to the whole of Oregon, although perhaps not perfect and free from difficulty, is in every respect superior to any claim or title that

England may have in or to the disputed territory.

On the other hand, sir, upon what is the claim of the British Government to any portion of the Oregon territory founded? It is based principally, as I understand it, upon the rights, if any, acquired by England from Spain, by virtue of the Nootka Sound convention, signed at the Escorial in 1790. By the stipulations of that treaty the right to trade with the Indians, to make settlements, and to establish colonies on the territory was yielded to England, to be exercised in common with Spain, whilst the right of sovereignty, instead of being vested in England, was expressly held in abeyance. This treaty, however, being annulled and abrogated by the war of 1796 between England and Spain, all the rights of England under that treaty were at the same time annulled and abrogated, and fell with the treaty.

I have referred, sir, to the Nootka Sound convention for the purpose of directing the attention of the House to another branch of the claim of England to the Oregon territory, which claim, though not founded upon, yet arose during the existence of that convention. I refer, sir, to the discovery of Frazer's river by McKenzie, a British subject, in 1792, and the subsequent settlement of that river by the Hudson Bay Company. It has been contended on the part of Great Britain that this discovery of Frazer's river gives to England a right to all the country drained by the waters of that river and its tributaries, upon the same principle that the discovery of the Columbia gives to the United States a right to the territory drained by its waters. This would be true if the discovery of these respective rivers had been made under similar circumstances, and equally independent of Spain. But, sir, in 1792, when Frazer's river was discovered, England and Spain were the joint occupants of the very region drained by this river, by virtue of the convention to which I have referred. England being in possession by agreement with Spain, is to be regarded as a tenant in common with her, and thus the acts of one or both would, upon every principle of civil and national law, inure to the benefit of each other. When, therefore, discoveries and settlements were made within the territory subsequent to the convention of 1790, the whole benefits of such discoveries and settlements inured as much to the benefit of Spain as of Great Britain; the settlement of the one becomes the settlement of the other, and both derive a mutual benefit from the acts of the other; neither party, during the existence of the convention, being competent to derive any exclusive right to the territory thus held in common from their own acts. And although Spain may have made no settlements whatever on Frazer's river, still Spain being a party in interest, is as such entitled to a full share of all the beneficial acts done by Great Britain. We have since become the owners of the Spanish title, and the convention of Nootka Sound being abrogated by the subsequent war between Spain and England, and the rights of England under that convention being annulled, we continue to hold the Spanish title even to the country drained by Frazer's river, our own title being thus strengthened and sustained by the discoveries and settlements of England herself. Our title, therefore, to the territory in dispute, as against England, is thus far

the better, ever, the sure settlement.

Such, important to be purchased by Great Britain, policy of much in the firm policy. The indicated but "wrote" to those who port of the to the rest of the men do no more could have us three times twice; at present the United utility for situation as sending their stores and the country to

The position, [Mr. of 1818, England, we could gratification and constant favor of the now under wave of specific crowd it to justice and this procedure or else as the common virtue.

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the better title. There are circumstances, how-
ever, that must control the United States in the fu-
ture settlement of this question.

Such, then, being our title to Oregon, the im-
portant question arises, what is the best policy
to be pursued in relation to this controversy with
Great Britain? A great deal has been said of the
policy of "masterly inactivity;" much in its praise,
much in its condemnation. At one time, sir, I was
the firm and uncompromising advocate of this po-
licy. The past and present condition of Oregon
indicated that this policy was not only "masterly,"
but "wise," and the result, if it had been permit-
ted to operate, would have proved the wisdom of
those who advocated it. The arguments in sup-
port of this policy were invincible—they appealed
to the reason and common sense of all; and if gen-
tlemen desired to obtain the "whole of Oregon,"
no more certain means of accomplishing this result
could have been adopted. Oregon is distant from
us three thousand miles; the whole region compara-
tively without population; a wilderness uninhab-
ited; at present without benefit either to England or
the United States, and cannot be of any practical
utility for years to come. It is in precisely such po-
sition as to enable us—by encouraging emigration,
sending there the hardy pioneers of the West, with
their strong arms and stout hearts, armed with the
axe and the rifle—to take such possession of the
country that no nation could take it from us.

The position taken by the gentleman from Geor-
gia, [Mr. Toombs,] that so long as the convention
of 1818, which was renewed in 1827, between
England and the United States remained in force,
we could not perfect our title to Oregon, by emi-
gration or otherwise, is certainly a correct position,
and constitutes with me a strong argument in fa-
vor of the notice contemplated by the resolution
now under consideration; for although wave after
wave of population may flow into that great Pa-
cific country; though we may fill it with cities, and
crowd it with towns and villages; erect palaces of
justice and temples to the Most High; yet, sir, all
this process of settlement would not perfect our
title or extinguish the claims of England, so long
as the convention of 1827 remains in full force and
virtue.

What, sir, will be the condition of Oregon in a
quarter of a century from this time? Turning to
the past, and examining what has been done in
other portions of our country, we may, to some
extent, answer the question. What was our con-
dition less than half a century ago? Our popula-
tion did not exceed five millions of souls—our cities
were few—towns and villages far distant from
each other—our commerce feeble, and the indus-
try of the country just awakening into life and
activity. Vast regions lay still in a state of na-
ture, and the Alleghanies then constituted the *ultima*
thule of American civilization. No adventurous
spirit that had climbed to the summit of the steep,
and cast his eye over the boundless waste be-
yond, had as yet even in dim prospect contem-
plated that wide and glorious valley, through which
flows the father of waters; none had as yet ven-
tured his footsteps into that land unknown. But,
sir, the scene has changed. The tide of our ad-
vancing population, like the waves of a mighty
sea, has dashed over the steep of the Alleghanies,
and, rolling through the valley of the Mississippi,

has covered and filled it all; and even now has
reached the foot of the Rocky mountains, and
assails every gorge of that mighty chain. That
barrier, lofty and insurmountable as it appears,
is beginning to yield—it will be crossed—it has
been crossed, and already our hardy pioneers were
found beyond them on their advancing way to the
Pacific. The operation of the inevitable laws of
population would have secured Oregon to us, in a
manner peaceful and efficient: we have increased
in less than half a century from five millions, until
we now number over twenty millions: we have
increased in wealth, in strength, and power and
influence, until we rival the first of the nations of
the earth. Our experience in years past appeals
with irresistible power in favor of the system of
"masterly inactivity."

But circumstances have now changed. It was a
wise policy; but it is no longer wisdom to pursue
it. We are now compelled to act—compelled by
circumstances over which we have no control. The
agitation of the whole country, and the prevailing
excitement upon this question, prevents the con-
summation of a policy hitherto wise. This agita-
tion has been produced by the act of the dominant
party, which has added another element to the po-
litical discords that distract us. The Baltimore
Convention introduced into its creed the two grand
articles of faith, "Texas and Oregon," in "disas-
trous conjunction," in the estimation of many gen-
tlemen now upon this floor, but who, at the time
of their adoption, submitted most cheerfully and
willingly to the decrees of that body. Sir, the in-
troduction of great national questions—questions
involving our relations with foreign nations—into
the political arena of party strife, is an experiment
of most doubtful tendency. Territorial aggran-
dizement has of late become a popular idea; patri-
otic appeals are made to the people; an extension
of our boundaries beyond their present territorial
limits is urged with vehemence and zeal; the spirit
of conquest, bloodless indeed as yet, is rife amongst
us; the policy of the country has been changed—a
change that must be met by correspondent action
prompt, efficient, and without delay.

I am not, sir, the advocate of the extension po-
licy; I have opposed it heretofore, and am opposed
to it now, unless in a manner perfectly in accord-
ance with the Constitution of our country, and
with the spirit of our institutions. Republican
principles must and will spread. Yet, sir, I do not
hold to the doctrine that we are bound to extend
our country with them. Nothing can resist the
spread of the principles of republican liberty. You
might as well attempt to chain the lightning in its
course, or stay the thunderbolt, as to arrest their
onward progress. The glorious principles of free-
dom will continue to spread, until thrones and dy-
nasties shall crumble into dust, until the despotisms
of the earth shall have passed away, and until the
world shall feel and acknowledge their power. But
I cannot consent to join the cry that the whole
American continent must come into our confedera-
cy, that the United States must extend from "sea
to sea," and from "the rivers to the ends of the
earth." It is impracticable, it is dangerous to the
integrity of the Union, and calculated to burst
asunder the cords which bind us as one people.
This fatal lust of extension, I fear, will sooner or
later bring down to the dust the last Republic the

world will ever see. If by our folly, sir, we jeopard the existence of our Union—if, by our reckless policy, we perish as a nation, with us will perish the last hope of freedom to the human race. Let our principles extend, give them the "wings of the morning," and let them "fly to the uttermost parts of the sea;" God speed their progress; but I beseech gentlemen to stop the career upon which they seem to have entered. The spirit of conquest is abroad in the land—that spirit that has written the history of the world in blood, and bowed the proudest nations of earth to the dust. Sir, there is a morbid, sickly appetite for territorial extension, that must be checked, or we must fall. I care not from what quarter it comes, it is pernicious, and threatens our dearest interests.

Sir, we have territory enough—a territory, including Oregon, the most magnificent the world ever saw. Why, then, seek, in this spirit of aggrandizement, to extend our territorial limits? Gentlemen have, during this debate, spoken in glowing terms of the greatness of our country, its honor, its power, and its grandeur. A proper degree of national pride is commendable. It is essential to the preservation of the national rights and national honor; but as with individuals so with nations, there is "a pride that goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit that goeth before a fall." If we have not reached that eminence, we are at least rapidly approaching it—a giddy height, from which we may be dashed to pieces. In the natural history of man, we are told that when an individual is raised to a great elevation, placed upon some lofty height, there is an almost irresistible impulse to dash himself from his giddy elevation—to perish by the fall. This principle is as applicable to nations as to individuals. Let gentlemen look at the past, and learn wisdom from experience. Sir, they can gather precious political truths among the ruins of empires.

Sir, the principles upon which I oppose the impolitic and dangerous extension of the limits of our republic do not apply to the territory of Oregon. That is a question of *retention* not of *extension*; not of admission, but of the assertion of our rights, and an honorable determination to maintain them.

In addition to the state of our country, the state of our foreign relations is another reason making it necessary to abandon the policy of "masterly inactivity," and adopt some other. Inactivity has ceased to be wise. We have been informed by the President of the United States, in his annual message to Congress, that the negotiations between the two countries on this Oregon question have been abandoned; that the offer of compromise he had felt bound to make, having been rejected by the British Minister, had been withdrawn; that there was no probability of any future offers of accommodation which we could accept with a due regard to the national honor. He recommends that the notice be given, and that, at the expiration of the twelve months, the time will have arrived when our national rights must either be abandoned or firmly maintained. If so, what is now to be done? Must we stand still; must we, under circumstances like those which now mark our foreign relations, fold our arms and permit England to remain in quiet possession of the whole of Oregon? The present is a crisis which demands prompt, united, urgent action

The President has recommended that notice be immediately given of the termination of the existing convention between us and England in relation to Oregon. Now, sir, although I happen to differ with the President in political opinions, yet, this being an American question, it becomes the duty of every American citizen to unite in giving him that prompt and efficient support in this measure that shall give him a moral power which will be felt, not only from one end of this continent to the other, but from one end of the British dominions to the other. I do not wish, in a question of this character, to see the American Congress standing in opposition to the American President. For this, among other reasons, I am in favor of giving the notice. I prefer it to be given in the manner proposed in the amendment offered by the gentleman from Alabama, [Mr. HILLIARD;] but, sir, if that amendment shall be rejected by the House, I am ready to go for the resolutions introduced by the honorable chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I would refer this notice to the President of the United States, with authority to give it whenever, in his judgment, the interest of the country required it. It may be said that we are not sincere in the advocacy of the notice, when the notice, as proposed by the gentleman from Alabama, devolves the responsibility on the President of the United States. It is but devolving upon him the exercise of his constitutional rights, and no greater responsibility than properly pertains to the high office which the people of the country has conferred upon him. The President, aided by his Cabinet, is the proper person to decide upon the propriety or impropriety of giving this notice. He is acquainted with the whole course of negotiation on the subject. He is behind the scenes. He understands all the secret machinery that is at work, and which has not been exposed to the public eye. With him rests the responsibility, and upon him would I devolve it. Nor would I do it out of any disrespect towards him or the political party of which he is the head, but because it belongs to him to settle this question.

Another reason why I am opposed to passing the resolution declaring absolutely that the notice should be given, is, that thereby the President would be deprived of the exercise of his discretion, in case circumstances should hereafter be so changed as to render it unadvisable to give it. But, if the House should not concur in these views, I shall vote for the proposition of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for the giving this notice without the intervention of the discretion of the President.

It has been said that such notice must necessarily lead to war; not that it is in itself a declaration of war, but that war must naturally and inevitably follow as a consequence. But I appeal to gentlemen who have held this language that this notice is not a war measure; it is only the exercise of a right provided for in the treaty of 1827, and as such cannot possibly be a cause of offence. England has a right, by the same treaty, to give the notice to us; and would gentlemen regard such notice from Great Britain as just cause of war? Certainly not. What may result from it at the expiration of the year is another question. It is meanwhile all mere conjecture—a speculation on probabilities—a simple expression of personal opinions. The remote consequences of present action cannot be fore-

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solutely the result. It is for us to determine what
we are to do now.

To permit the question to rest in its present con-
dition, without action on the part of our Govern-
ment, will more certainly lead to the results which
gentlemen wish to avoid than the action now pro-
posed. Oregon is now filling rapidly up with
American citizens. During the past year, seven
thousand have left their friends and home on this
side of the mountains, and are now in the valleys
of Oregon. They have carried with them the hab-
its, feelings, and the patriotism of American citi-
zens. Jealous of their rights, with a constitutional
hatred to oppression; ever disposed to oppose the
ambitious designs of England, and unwilling to
submit to the jurisdiction of her laws, which have
been extended over this territory; daring and im-
petuous; collisions must take place between the
American emigrant and the British subject in the
employment of the Hudson Bay Company. The
very agitation of the question in this House creates
a necessity for immediate action. The debates
here will be read by our countrymen on the shores
of the Pacific; their spirit will be stirred within
them when they read the glowing appeals made
to American patriotism; their hatred to British
oppression will be excited when they hear the
fierce denunciations of British rapacity made by
members upon this floor. A conflict is inevitable
there unless our rights are determined and main-
tained by our action here, by which alone a speedy
and honorable settlement of this vexed question
can be effected.

Sir, if the notice is given, it does not follow as a
matter of course that we are to take armed pos-
session of Oregon; it does not follow that we are
to attempt to drive out every English settler, or
that we are to take military possession up to 49°
so as to give offence to England. By the notice,
we only say to England that we are unwilling that
our present connexion with her in relation to the
Oregon territory should any longer be continued;
that we are desirous to determine the extent of our
rights, and to enjoy them in exclusive possession,
and to extend to our citizens there the protection
of our laws.

I am in favor of the notice, Mr. Chairman, as a
measure of peace. It is a measure of peace, and
not of war, and the sequel of this controversy will
establish these conclusions. A system of bragg-
docio and gasconading has been practised not only
in the United States but in England in relation to
this great question. Both parties are engaged in
it; we stand here on this side of the water and
shake our fists at John Bull, and John Bull in re-
turn hurls back defiance upon us. This is the
relation of the parties, both knowing and under-
standing well the trickery attempted to be played
off upon each other.

Sir, let the notice be given. It will prove to
ourselves that we are in earnest on this great and
absorbing question; that this system of bullying
is at an end; that this question has assumed a
magnitude that demands that our rights to Oregon
shall be maintained; that the attempts to make it
a party question may be defeated and abandoned,
and that it be placed before the country in its true,
its national character.

Again, sir, I am in favor of the notice, to prove

to England that we are in earnest. She has never
believed it; she never will believe it until she re-
ceives notice from the President of the United
States that we no longer desire to hold that terri-
tory in the manner we now hold it. Let England
be convinced we are in earnest; let our people be
so convinced also; and, my word for it, nego-
tiations, when reopened, will be conducted in a
very different spirit from that which has hereto-
fore characterized them.

Let the notice be given to prove to the world
that on this question we are in earnest. Other na-
tions are looking on and watching the progress of
this controversy with anxiety and deep interest.
The issues of this question involve great and mo-
mentous consequences, not only to ourselves, but
to the world. Should war be the result—should
the two greatest nations of the globe engage in a
long and bloody war—nations which are the bul-
warks of Christianity, of moral and religious civi-
lization—it will not be confined to the original par-
ties—to Great Britain and the United States. Sir,
the breaking out of such a war would put the
match to a magazine whose explosion would con-
vulse the world.

There is another reason why this notice should
be given. The country is now in an agitated and un-
settled condition. All is doubt. Uncertainty every
where prevails. It affects every branch of indus-
try; it paralyzes the business of the country and
unnerves the strong arm of the mechanic. The
commerce and finances of the nation, the revenues
of the Government, and all the pursuits of active
life, must suffer, and suffer severely, from a longer
continuance of the uncertainty with which this sub-
ject is surrounded. This uncertainty, this *quasi*
war, must be removed. This can be effected by
the notice proposed. It will give us peace. Let
the country know what to expect. Either let them
be certified that there will be no war, or, if war
must come, let the fact be known; and if war is to
be the result, let it come now. Let us not desire
to delay it, and thus reserve its horrors for our pos-
terity. This would be cowardice. If it is to come,
let it fall on our own heads—on the heads of those
who have occasioned it. This cowardly shrink-
ing from present responsibility is incompatible
with the honor of the American statesman, with
the honor of the American character. Should the
conflict come, the rights and the honor of the coun-
try will be nobly sustained—sustained with all the
energy of a great and powerful nation; sustained
by the united hearts and united arms of a brave
and generous people. But, sir, there will be no
war.

There is yet another reason for the notice. If
we wish to perfect our title to Oregon, we must
give the notice. So long as this convention con-
tinues in force this cannot be done. When the
convention shall have been annulled, then, sir, all
the settlements made there by our emigrants will
inure to our benefit, and our title acquire additional
strength from possession and occupation. The set-
tlement of the country, in itself considered, during
the existence of the joint occupancy, evidently
gives us no title: it confers, however, one impor-
tant benefit—it gives us the power to maintain our
rights there. We require additional numerical
force in Oregon. To secure this, dissolve all con-
nexion with England; extend over our citizens the

protection of our laws; give them aid and security in their toilsome march, and soon the wild spirit of western adventure will crowd your mountain-passes with hardy emigrants. Then, sir, the American settler, as he wends his way to the Rocky mountains, and takes up his abode in that far-off country, will find going with him the protection of American laws; that protection will be with him in his journeyings by the way; in his slumbers in the dark defiles of the Rocky mountains; will be with and around him when in the valleys of Oregon he pitches his tent and builds his cabin, to remain there an American citizen, near the shores of the great Pacific. Let us encourage emigration; let our people go armed with the physical means of self-defence; send them with the unerring western rifle; with hearts true to themselves and their country, and Oregon will be ours.

It has been said, sir, that England, with her voracious appetite for dominion, never relinquishes her grasp upon territory when once within her power; that, in her negotiations, she seldom recedes from the positions she assumes. I will not deny the skill and success of British diplomacy. She varies it to suit the character of the nation with which she negotiates. She tramples upon the weak, flatters the timid, and betrays the strong. Yet, notwithstanding her power as a nation, and her skill in diplomacy, the lion of England, like the king of the forest, will quail and cower before the unflinching gaze of stern and determined resistance. With the memorable example before us of the thirteen American colonies wrested from the British Crown, and their independence acknowledged by that Power, it is too late to say that England never yields. Did time permit, I could refer gentlemen to the history of the treaty of peace at Ghent to prove that even England can recede from propositions declared by her commissioners to be "*sine qua non*" in the adjustment of existing controversies. In the progress of that negotiation, she demanded, as a "*sine qua non*," the pacification of the Indian tribes, and in effect their recognition by the United States as independent nations within our territory. A proposition so presumptuous, it is needless to add, was instantly rejected by the American commissioners. She further demanded that the United States should abandon her naval power upon the lakes, and dismantle her fortifications upon their shores and along the line of our northern frontier. Like the other, it was promptly rejected, and England very prudently receded from her bold "*sine qua non*" propositions. In the conduct of negotiations and of this controversy, we must look England firmly in the face. To doubt, to hesitate, to betray symptoms of fear, is to lose all.

Sir, there will be no war. The mutual interests of both countries forbid it. The commercial relations of the two nations obviously require peace, and no reason now exists or can arise from our present action why these relations should be disturbed. Gentlemen have pointed us to England, to her extensive warlike preparations, her steamers of war, and the fortification of her coast, and have asked, what means all this preparation at this crisis? England, notwithstanding her extensive warlike preparations—although she may be manning her fleets and floating on the ocean her war-steamer by hundreds—will not enter into a con-

test with us. All this is not intended for the American nation. Another question is soon to be solved in Europe; there is another struggle soon to come, that will require all her force. All Europe is now awaiting in intense anxiety the happening of an event that will be pregnant with the fate of empires. I refer, sir, to the death of Louis Philippe of France. His death (and I am not alone in this opinion) will be the signal for a great struggle throughout the whole of Europe. Then, sir, will come that conflict of systems of government to which gentlemen have so frequently alluded—a war of republicanism against despotism, of popular rights against oppression and tyranny. This is the contingency which the English dread more than they do the Oregon question, and this is the reason for her immense preparations. But if gentlemen suppose she is doing all this in reference to a contest with us, are we pursuing a prudent course? If Britain is putting on her armor to fight with us, it would be surely wise in us to follow her example. If gentlemen really believe that she has such a purpose, let them remember that when England strikes she strikes swiftly, and always strikes the first blow, and often with tremendous effect. Sir, in our present relations with England, I feel inclined to adopt the sentiment of the old Irish baronet, whose very blunders were full of practical good sense and sound philosophy, "that the best way to avoid danger is to meet it plump." Sir, let us be prepared for any contingency—always ready, always willing to defend our country and maintain her honor.

Again, sir, as a proof that there will be no war, and that such an event is not anticipated by those who hold the reins of Government, I refer gentlemen to the fact that, although the Administration has told us that negotiations are ended, yet no preparations are recommended or appropriations asked for the navy or for the army; that no steps have been taken to place the country in a state of defence. But, instead of all this, the Secretary of the Treasury sits down deliberately in his office and computes that, after a certain number of years, there will be a certain sum of money in the Treasury, and at the same time recommends that the tariff of 1842 be repealed, and that duties be reduced to the revenue standard; thus bestowing upon England the greatest favor she could ask from the American Government. Such facts are utterly inconsistent with the idea of war.

But, sir, what is to be gained by war? Can we conquer England? Can she subdue us? The idea is preposterous. Neither nation can enter into such a contest without immense sacrifices. We may expend millions of treasure and shed oceans of blood, and yet our controversy with England be no more near its termination than when the first gun was fired.

We have been told during this debate that we must not look at consequences. No; but, like the "unthinking horse, must rush into the battle." I can adopt no such principle of action on this question. It is our duty to sit down like wise men and count the cost; to consider well what we are about, and what we are going to do; to consider our adversary in her strength, her means of attack, and her ability to injure; to consider our own power, our means of defence, our ability to resist aggression. This is wisdom; and, having thus acted, if

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war must come, we will find that it was not "folly to be wise."

It has been asserted here that a compromise of this question under existing circumstances would be dishonorable. In this sentiment I do not concur. Though the previous negotiation may have closed, I cannot believe that negotiations have been abandoned. This Government, in 1818, in 1824, and 1826, offered terms of compromise to England. A similar offer was made by the present Administration in 1845. Sir, if compromise is dishonorable now, it was dishonorable at the respective periods to which I have referred. We have repeatedly, by our conventions with England and otherwise, recognised her claim to Oregon. To settle and adjust those claims we have proposed to her an equitable division of the territory in dispute; and we now should be bound by the honor of our nation, if an offer came from England, to accept any proposition which shall be as good as we ourselves have offered. But, sir, we cannot, consistently with honor, renew the proposition. England has rejected our terms. She alone must renew the offer.

Sir, it is my firm conviction that if notice be given, before the expiration of the twelve months negotiations will be reopened, and some amicable mode of adjustment be adopted. It cannot be that two nations elevated in civilization, distinguished for everything that adorns the national character, will rush blindly into war, the consequences of which no human imagination can trace.

I regret to have heard gentlemen, in the course of this discussion, talk so lightly and flippantly of war. War has its horrors; war has no charms for me. Sir, I have never witnessed "the battle of warriors, with its confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;" I desire never to witness such a scene. I have never heard the shriek of agony, wrung from the bosom of the dying soldier, as on the battle-field he yielded up his life; his anguish rendered more poignant as the thoughts of home and friends rushed in upon his soul. I have never heard the groan of the widow, from whose embrace the rough bloody hand of war has torn the idol of her heart; nor the sigh of the orphan, deprived of a fond and affectionate parent. I never wish to hear such sounds. Amid the shoutings of victory, such notes of woe are blended that they fall discordantly on the ear. The laurels that encircle the brow of the victor and the hero are stained with the blood and steeped in the tears of thousands. The aspirations of every patriot and Christian heart should ascend to the throne of the Eternal, that the evils and devastations of war may be averted from our beloved country. Sir, notwithstanding my abhorrence of war, I hope ever to be found an advocate of the preservation of our national honor and our national rights, at every hazard and at every sacrifice. But war, to be just, must be necessary. We must, in accordance with the strict principles of national honor, have exhausted every means in our power to bring about an amicable settlement of the controversy now

waged. Without it, war can never be justified. Have all these means been resorted to, so that nothing remains but war? The question is still open. The honor of the country is not involved, so as to prevent its amicable adjustment. What, sir, is national honor? Is it that sickly sensibility to imagined insult and injury that prompts men, in the spirit of modern chivalry, to imbrue their hands in the life's blood of their fellow-men? It is a nobler and more generous sentiment; it is a principle founded upon that grand sentiment, "do unto others as you would that others should do unto you." National honor must have its foundations deep in the eternal principles of truth and justice. All other honor is a bubble; it might glitter, but only to deceive and to betray.

There are other considerations which induce me to the course of policy I have indicated, but I forbear to detain the committee longer.

Do gentlemen doubt the policy of giving this notice? If doubts exist, I am always in favor of resolving them in such manner as to protect and defend the rights and interests of the country. To doubt on this question is to jeopard the interests of the nation.

"Our doubts are traitors;
And make us lose the good we might attain,
By fearing to attempt."

I believe, sir, the issue of our present difficulties on this subject will be peace—an honorable peace. But whilst such is my opinion, let us be prepared for any contingency. I would say to the country, be ready for war. Are we in that condition now? I do not wish unnecessarily to disclose our want of preparation to the world. Our actual condition is, however, well known. Preparation, prompt and efficient, is necessary, and I am willing, to-morrow, to vote appropriations for building forty iron steamers of war, if so many be required. [A voice: "Of Pennsylvania iron?"] Yes, of Pennsylvania iron, and thus afford incidental protection to the iron interest of Pennsylvania, notwithstanding the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. HUNTER] has expressed his regret that the agitation of the Oregon question had prevented, and was likely to prevent, the Democratic party from consummating their favorite measure, the repeal of the tariff of 1842. To-morrow I am ready to vote appropriations of fifty millions of dollars to place our country in a state of readiness to meet every emergency, although direct taxation might be the result. The citizens of Pennsylvania, already pressed down with a burden of taxation, will be ready to meet this additional burden, if necessary for the defence of the interests and honor of the country. Their patriotism and valor need no praise from me. In the day of trial they will be found at the post of danger; in the field of battle they will be found "first in the fight, and last in the retreat."

Sir, I cannot conclude without recurring to the sentiment of the gallant Decatur, as expressive of my own feelings, and applicable to the present crisis: "Our country! may she always be right; but right or wrong, our country!"